

W65

WHO IS CHRIST?

OR

OUR LORD'S TEACHING CONCERNING HIS OWN PERSON;

A

DISCOURSE,

PREACHED IN THE WESLEYAN CHURCH, GREAT ST.
JAMES STREET, MONTREAL, ON CHRISTMAS
DAY, 1850.

BY

HENRY WILKES, D.D.



Montreal:

PRINTED BY JOHN C. BECKET, NO. 22, GREAT SAINT JAMES STREET.

1851.

A 52
W65

EXPLANATION.

The following Correspondence will explain and account for the publication of the following Sermon :—

MONTREAL, 30th DEC., 1850.

Rev. Sir,

Several friends who listened to the Sermon you delivered in the Wesleyan Church, Great St. James Street, on Christmas Day, are very desirous to have it published, believing that with the divine blessing it may be productive of much good in checking the worst form of error in Montreal at the present time. It is proposed to publish it for *gratuitous* distribution in the city. If you will kindly consent to its publication, please furnish me with the Manuscript and a Title-page, and I will at once take the necessary steps to have it printed. An answer at your earliest convenience will much oblige

Dear Sir,

Yours sincerely,

JOHN HOLLAND.

To the Rev. Henry Wilkes, D.D.

BEAVER HALL, 31st December, 1850.

Dear Sir,

I will cheerfully comply with the request conveyed in your note of yesterday, which I received this morning. The Sermon is one of a series on Our Lord's Teaching which I am delivering to my own flock. But it will bear detaching from the others, and as it was written

with some humble desire to do good, if you and friends think that the press can aid in this design, I am happy to co-operate with you. This is done more readily, because it is asked for as preached to a congregation not of my own denomination, and by members of that congregation. I love to engage in such fraternal services, and am glad publicly to show, in these trying times, that the friends of the Redeemer, though divided by slight party lines, are nevertheless all one.

You shall have the Manuscript and a Title-page in a day or two. Some remarks delivered extemporaneously will have to be written out.

I am, Dear Sir,

Yours truly,

HENRY WILKES.

Mr. John Holland.

WHO IS CHRIST?

OR

OUR LORD'S TEACHING CONCERNING HIS OWN PERSON.

"The woman saith unto him, I know that Messiah cometh, who is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things. Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he." John iv. 25, 26.

THE devout student of the life of Jesus Christ will be more and more impressed with the conviction that He is truly a wonderful Being, far away above all comparison or parallel. He rises upon the world as the Sun, which is not to be compared with the other stars of heaven, and which, while pouring a flood of radiance on every thing else, remains itself a glorious mystery. "I am the light of the world," was his own assumption, an averment fully sustained by his ministry. It is observable, that while he was the expected one of Israel, "the Desire of all nations," his advent took mankind by surprise. Often had the prophets spoken of him, and sacrificial rites had cast their long shadows before to indicate his coming, yet "he came to his own, and his own received him not." The light shone, but the "darkness admitted it not." They were amazed and confounded, and withal the world avenged itself for this surprise, by taking up arms against him, and against all his true disciples. Plainly did facts indicate from the beginning, that "His kingdom was not of this world." The world knew him not. They rejected him. Jesus of Nazareth became "a name every where spoken against," so that he had with much justice to complain of the world's hatred, "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. * * * * He that hateth me, hateth my Father also. If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father. But this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law. They hated me without a cause."

There were those who at the birth of Jesus Christ rejoiced triumphantly at the fulfilment of the promise, and the accomplishment of their long cherished hope. They

had waited for the redemption of Israel, and like good old Simeon and Anna the prophetess, they hailed with joy the advent of the child Jesus, concerning whom the prophecy had been recorded seven centuries before, "Unto us a child is born; unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever." But it is more than doubtful if they had accurate conceptions. They believed that this one should be the Messiah, but precisely what the Messiah was to be, did not, we apprehend, appear plain to their minds. Some great and glorious one—the Lord of Angels—the Lord of all—God manifest in the flesh, were thoughts found in the Psalms and in the Prophets concerning Him, but if we may judge by the views of the disciples 30 years afterwards, their ideas were far from accurate. To our minds, upon whom the light of a full revelation hath beamed, the Mosaic economy, designed to unfold the Saviour and his mediatorial offices and work, ever appears admirably illustrative and in fact essential to a full understanding of the great truths of Christianity; but it obviously did not afford the disciples a single correct presentiment concerning Jesus the Christ. By comparing accomplishment and prediction, antitype and type, *we* discover harmony and beauty, and withal learn to understand both; but *they* having only prediction and type, the actual Christ came upon *them* as a new and unthought of existence, and the truths he taught as wonderful novelties. One can trace throughout their attendance upon his ministry this wondering surprise, this amazement at ever gathering mystery and glory. "What manner of man is this that even the winds and the sea obey him!" They confessed that He was "the Christ the Son of the living God;" yet was their astonishment great when the demons were manifestly subject to him. Gradually, indeed, the truth beamed upon their souls, so that after his resurrection, one said "MY LORD and MY GOD!" and another exclaimed, "*LORD thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee!*" but it was not till some days after his ascension, when the Holy Ghost came down upon them, bringing all his works and all things he had said to remembrance, that they seem to have been fully awake to the great fact that they had been entertaining the Lord of angels unawares. As "the words of Christ were once more repeated in their ears, and the wonders of his life were

made to pass in slow and stately procession before their eyes, they awoke as from a trance, and proclaimed that 'the word' who was with God in eternity, who is God, had been made flesh, and dwelt among us, and that they had beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." At the dictation of the Spirit, they proceeded to record a sketch of his life; but they labored at no encomium; they lauded not himself, nor do they denounce his enemies; they *left that life to speak for itself*; they felt that in simply uttering the name of Jesus they were repeating a name for all that was transcendent in humanity, and all that is glorious in Deity! Moreover, now full of love and zeal they record their own misapprehensions, inconsistencies and sins, along with their narrative of his life, and in their inspired Epistles they laud and magnify his name and the unsearchable riches of his grace, determined to glory in no other, and willing to die for his sake, if such should be the result of proclaiming his worth to their fellow-men.

Our Lord's teaching, concerning himself, would naturally, in these circumstances, have *reserves*, and be given in *parts*, so that there would be no sudden outburst of splendor. It had been impossible to teach them otherwise, for the subject is too great for instant communication. There is need for the formation of preliminary ideas, and for the awakening in the mind the elements of these wondrous thoughts. After he had taught them much, we find him still saying—"I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now;" and he postponed the fullness of communication until the Holy Ghost should come in power. "Howbeit, when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth. . . . He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you." Yet with all this taken into account, Christ spoke of himself almost constantly; drawing towards his person and work a concentrated attention, and proposing *himself* as the object of trust, of confidence, of love. The Bible is so full of Christ, that we cannot study its sacred pages without meeting him either in type and symbol, or in prophetic announcement, or as the subject of Evangelists' narrative, and Apostolic argument. But in order to simplicity and definiteness of conception, it is sometimes desirable, to confine our study of Him within some limited range, that we may have the teaching within its precincts distinctly, and with power, before our minds. The text naturally leads us to Christ's teaching concerning himself; and this I propose to restrict mainly to His eternal

existence, and to the constitution of His person. Let us then devoutly study

THE TEACHING OF JESUS CHRIST, AS IT RELATED TO HIS
ETERNAL EXISTENCE, AND TO THE CONSTITUTION OF
HIS PERSON.

Ancient prophecy, in its mystic tones, had spoken of one "whose goings forth had been of old from everlasting." Our Lord identified the application of it to himself, by lifting the veil from a past eternity, and carrying back their thoughts through dateless ages; assuring them there *never was a period* when he was not there; there, as an object of infinite complacency; there in a fellowship of glory, in an identity of character, and in a unity of essence with Deity. "Before Abraham was, I am," and in the hearing of his disciples he exclaimed, "Glorify me with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." "Thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." He describes the Son of man as seated on the throne of judgment, who shall invite the justified to enter into the kingdom prepared for them *before the foundation of the world*; and if it be asked who *then* prepared it, he replies—"I prepare a place for you."

Ancient prophecy led them to expect *a duality of natures in one person*. Distinct was its utterance on this point, however imperfectly it was understood. In David the Messiah exclaims—"A body hast thou prepared me—In the volume of the book—it is written of me." Isaiah's lyre accompanies the sacred song—"Unto us a child is born—unto us a Son is given . . . and his name shall be called . . . The mighty God."

In one person, the frailty of a mortal child, and the incommunicable attributes of the mighty God. But what imagination was prepared, even by this exciting prediction, for the great reality? The mystery lay in the unwonted greatness and glory of the thing; inexplicable, because far above our range of thought; so ineffably grand, that our minds, in the struggle to reach it, are baffled and bewildered. Most natural, therefore, and in accordance with the exigencies of our case, was the Lord's reserve. He was not careful to expound the complexity of his nature—He presented no theory. His design was not to gratify curiosity, but to pour into the heart of the world the entire advantage which that complexity was capable of producing. There is no jealous tenacity in asserting his higher nature—it is not obtruded upon the attention; that is rather left for Apostolic teaching; but having stooped to the

humble condition of humanity, he regarded his humiliation as consisting, partly, in dwelling on the low position to which he had stooped. Yet, though he frequently waived the subject, there were often occasions when he deemed it well to put forth no mean assumptions—no common claims! The trumpet placed at his lips gave no uncertain sound. He shrank not from the very highest of all pretensions; but with unaffected dignity and simplicity, owned himself *Divine*!

His perfect *manhood* was taught—no mystery or doubt was allowed to gather about *that*. “He grew in wisdom and in favor with God and with men.” He was baptized of John at Jordan. He was sorely tempted forty days by the Devil; and having in this, his human nature, utterly routed the enemy, angels came and ministered unto him. He ate and drank with his disciples, journeying from place to place, and proclaiming the kingdom with a human voice, expressive of human feelings. He sat, wearied with his journey, near Jacob’s well, and sent his disciples into the neighboring city to purchase food. He groaned in spirit, and wept, and “sweat, as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.” The disciples knew him well, as “the son of man,” as “the man Christ Jesus.” That voice was the utterance of humanity in its sweetest tones. That aspect of grief was the unaffected expression of “the man of sorrows.” The eye which met theirs, as they gazed upon him, expressed the love of a human heart—the most tender and loving of any that ever throbbed in human bosom. He laid him down and sweetly slept, having no fear, for he had done no wrong. He was faint and hungry, and once and again distressed. He worships, and depends and obeys as a man. We affirm his perfect *manhood*: humanity, body and soul, without defect. He unfolded this, and his disciples ever realized this. With whatever of mystery or of glory he was surrounded, he was, unmistakably *the man Christ Jesus*. “What manner of *man* is this?” “Whence hath this *man* this wisdom and these mighty works? Is not this the Carpenter’s son? His mother and his brethren are they not with us?” “Behold thy mother and thy brethren stand without calling thee!” It is not often placed in modern controversy, and it is singularly forgotten by some theorists; but it is a matter of no trivial importance to understand that Jesus Christ was a *man*, and in his teaching always indicated that the evidence of their senses who saw and heard him, testified truly. One of them afterwards declared—“He who was from the beginning, whom we have

heard, whom we have seen with our eyes, whom we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the word of life."

When, however, he is compared with other human teachers, whatever may be their high qualifications, every one is sensible of a total incompatibility, an entire opposition. There is an essential difference *in kind*—the parties belong not to the same category. However you may account for it, there is an absolute and inherent diversity. *They* call themselves the servants of God—so does *He*. *They* declare that they were sent of God—so does *He*. *They* urge men to listen to and to obey God—so does *He*. But they hide *themselves* in their message; whereas Christ is the *burden of his own message*. *They* direct attention to *Deity*. He does so, but it is by concentrating attention upon *himself*. *They* unfold Jehovah as the object of faith, of confidence, of love; so does *He*, but it is by presenting *Himself* as that object, and claiming the faith, the trust, the homage, the service of universal man. We urge special attention to this diversity. What other prophet or teacher ever spake or put forth pretensions like this man? What mere creature, however exalted, could, without intolerable presumption, place himself in parallelism with the Lord Almighty, as Christ does in the complaint already quoted? "*They have both seen and hated both me and my Father.*" And, then, who else but this great one could, without wickedness, place his own commandments alongside the Divine, indeed, make them *the Divine will*, and peremptorily demand obedience? "*A new commandment I give unto you.*" "*Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.*"

We are so familiar from our youth up with the sayings of Jesus Christ, that we find it difficult to realize their extraordinary novelty and grandeur. I have noted the disadvantage under which, during his personal ministry, his disciples labored, a disadvantage from which we are freed, as we are favored with a perfect unfolding. They did not write the Gospels until filled with the Holy Spirit, all things were brought to their remembrance, and they fully understood their bearing. We have the advantage supplied by that extraordinary narrative; a narrative illustrated by the Epistles, unfolded and confirmed by subsequent triumphs of grace. We may, therefore, with all propriety, place ourselves as beholders and listeners, as the Evangelists' story causes to pass before us, in singularly beautiful procession, the several facts and teachings

of that wonderful life and ministry. As they do so, we behold a man breathing, walking, sitting, sleeping, eating, drinking, talking like ourselves. There is, indeed, mysterious grandeur in the circumstances of his birth, and in the unhesitating proclamation of his forerunner and herald. His pretensions and assumptions are of no common order, and withal they bear direct and continued reference to ancient prophecies with which we are familiar, and which have created expectation of a Messiah; *still he is a man—unmistakeably A MAN!*



This wonderful man looks upon us;—and, speaking to us as one commissioned to teach, says, “No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of Man who is in heaven.” “Before Abraham was, I AM.” “The glory which I had with the Father before the world was.” “I am not of the world.” “I know whence I came, and whither I go, but ye cannot tell whence I come and whither I go.” “Ye neither know me nor my Father.” “He that hath known me hath known the Father.” “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.” “I and my Father are one.” “No one knoweth the Son but the Father,” *requiring, then, a being of infinite intuition to know him to perfection.* We listen again,—the sentiments are *repeated* in diverse forms of expression, but without any affectation of greatness, in calm, self-conscious, simple dignity. Now, what are we to think? Why, assuredly, either that we are listening to outrageous blasphemy, or else to the only being incapable of blasphemy, because he alone can be the object of it. What are we to *think*? Why, that, regarding these as the utterances of obvious humanity, a principle of interpretation hitherto unknown to the world, must be found and applied to his self-descriptions; a principle which may well be *sacred to that purpose alone*, since the language of no other being will need its application. The principle is, that while these are the utterances of a human voice and being, they are also the authoritative declarations of the Infinite God: this mysterious personage being of the seed of David according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit of holiness, *i. e.*, his Divine nature, powerfully evinced to be “the Son of God;”—or, to use the inspired words of the same Apostle, “who, concerning the flesh, came of the fathers,” but “who is over all, God blessed for ever.”

The tones of that voice, accompanied with the glance

of that benignant eye, reach us again, saying to a prostrate paralytic, "thy sins are forgiven thee," and to those who surround, "That ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins,—then saith he to the sick of the palsy, Arise, take up thy bed and walk." He summons the world to yield up its heart to him, complaining, "Ye will not come unto *me* that ye might have life." He makes its homage to the Father, a pattern of its homage to him. "As the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them, even so the Son quickeneth *whom he will*, for the father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son, *that all men should honor the Son even as they honor the Father.*" He calls himself emphatically the Son of man, and solemnly announces that there is a sense in which the Father is greater than he, a statement which no *mere creature* could ever have thought it necessary to make. Addressing the Infinite God, he calmly says, "Father, *I will* that they, also, whom thou hast given me may be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory." Nathanael had retired under the fig-tree, where he knew no human eye had seen him. This Great One afterwards beheld him approach, and in reply to the question "Whence knowest thou me," answered, "Before Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig-tree, *I saw thee!*" To the woman at the well of Samaria he disclosed an intimate knowledge of her entire life and her character. He replied once and again to the unuttered thoughts, now of his disciples and now of the Scribes and Pharisees who *mentally murmured*, just as any other would reply to *words!* He pledged his presence in all places and at all future time, to two or three gathered together in his name. "If two of you shall agree *on earth*, [no matter in what part of it, nor in how many places at the same time,] as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my father who is in heaven, *For where two or three are gathered together in my name, THERE AM I IN THE MIDST OF THEM.*" And having heard all this, what can we say other than that the speaker assumes the prerogatives of Jehovah; and not only so, but manifests his possession of them? He forgives sins, and, in testimony, actually *heals*. He omnisciently knows the privacy of Nathanael, the doings of the woman, the secret thoughts and reasonings of disciples and accusers; and he distinctly announces them. Can we hear all this without feeling that God must be present in the person of the mysterious speaker? that the throne of Deity must be, in a sense, removed from heaven to earth? Can we resist the unavoidable impression and conclusion, that he who stands

before us in mysterious combination, with a nature like our own, was at the same moment present, and would be ever present in *his superior nature*, in regions immeasurably remote from earth? the sovereign and uncircumscribed energy of the Universe!—And when we listen to his defence from the charge of violating the Sabbath-law, in which he declares, “My Father worketh hitherto, and *I work*,” indicating that as the God of providence had no Sabbath in his upholding and sustaining all beings and things in the Universe, so had He none; but secured the repose of that Universe as the result of his unintermitting activity conjointly with the Father:—when his words come as sweet music to our ears, in the promise made in the Father’s name to every Christian, “*We will come unto him, and make our abode with him*,”—When he so graciously invites us to commit our highest interests to his keeping, to become vitally united to him as branches of a vine, to yield our conscience, our heart, our entire being to his control in such a manner and to such an extent as that it would be absurd in a creature to demand, and madness in us to think of, were he only a creature, we are left to the conclusion, which we feel it almost profane to mention, that this speaker is the most assuming and arrant impostor the world ever saw, or else that he is the Supreme Ruler of the Universe, worthy of, and rightly claiming the homage of the intelligent creation.

The same form of argument is presented by our Lord’s trial, sentence and execution as a malefactor. Let us draw near and study that terrible scene in order to learn what he teaches therein on the subject before us. The charge brought against him by the Jewish rulers was clearly defined. They tried him upon it and found him guilty. This they reported to Pilate in the memorable words “We have a law, and by our law he ought to die; because he made himself the Son of God.” This law was that of blasphemy, which was expressed with the utmost precision.—Sennacherib was guilty of this crime, in ascribing to himself powers, and a command over success and victory, such as belong to none but an Omnipotent Being. No one was to be esteemed a blasphemer, according to the Jewish understanding of this law, unless they had expressly uttered THE NAME, or in some direct manner assumed the prerogatives of God. Josephus mentions various impostors who rose up, about the time of the siege of Jerusalem, who called themselves prophets, and doubtless, according to our Lord’s prediction, Messiahs or Christs; but, though he describes their atrocities in strong terms, he never charges them with *blasphemy*.

When they brought Christ before their own court on this charge, they found a difficulty in proving it by two witnesses, who could agree on any specific phrase. At length the High Priest appealed to himself, "I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God." Jesus directly answered in the affirmative; solemnly adding, "Hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man, sitting on the right hand of Power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." Then the High Priest rent his clothes, saying, "He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy. What think ye? They answered and said, He is guilty of death." Now, it is quite plain that if they understood the assumption of the name and dignity of the Son of God, to be no more than an expression of his royal dignity, or pre-eminent sanctity, or his prophetic mission, this charge of blasphemy would not lie. Such meaning of the appellation "Son of God," however high you may choose to carry it in your supposition, would not, in any sense, involve blasphemy. Absolute and unquestionable assumption of divinity, or reviling Jehovah, or some act having direct relation to the Incommunicable Deity, was essential to the crime.

The point in hand, be it remembered, is not what Christ meant by this appellation, but what the Jews understood him to mean. Once and again, do we observe, as towards the close of his ministry he became more explicit on this point, that they understood him to claim equality with God. Such claim did the Sanhedrim understand him to put forth at his trial,—and equally do they so consider him as assuming, when they mock him on the cross. I apprehend that no candid reader of the Evangelists, can doubt that the Jewish people and rulers understood our Lord as making himself the Son of God, by which they understood the assumption of Supreme Divinity—the authority and power of the Infinite God. They may have been mistaken, *but this was their understanding.*

Now, at this crisis of the history of Jesus Christ, when the rulers of his nation had him before them, when all eyes were upon him, and when Pilate's attention was so emphatically called to him,—it was his bounden duty explicitly and solemnly to tell them that they mistook his meaning, if such were the case. On the point of his actual meaning no vestige of doubt or of error must lie, if he is to be faithful to his mission. Are they deceived?

mistaken? Does he not mean to assume perfect equality with the Father in his essential nature? Then is he under the utmost conceivable obligation *to tell them so*. He has constant opportunity of answering for himself. O how earnest should be his disavowals! He must obtrude the denial upon them; must enter his protest against their misapprehensions; and adopt every practicable method to set himself right with them in this important particular. Do you ask for the grounds of this obligation? We reply, *first*;—*A regard for his own life*. No man has a right to throw away his life, because he will not rebut a falsehood, or remove a misapprehension. *Secondly*;—*A regard to his own character*. Such a slander as this may not be tolerated. His influence is forever ruined, if people suppose him guilty of the odious crime of blasphemy. No one has a right to allow such a stain to rest upon him if he can remove it. *Thirdly*;—*His duty to his country*. The charge involved treason and rebellion against the Theocratic Head of the Jewish nation. Should he, this remarkable teacher, die as a traitor? Should he endorse by his assumptions and his death, this fearful evil? Should he do all he could to injure his country? Every consideration of patriotism protested against his silence under the charge, if they misunderstood him in making it. *Fourthly*;—*Regard for the honor of God*. Unless he disabuses their minds, he will tacitly give countenance to idolatry, for already he has followers who worship him, and he may have more. If he does not undo these mistaken impressions, he will virtually set up that vast system of *creature-worship* called Christianity, by which, throughout, the unity, the perfections, the glory of the Infinite God will be perpetually insulted. Who does not feel constrained in this view of it, to appeal to him with impassioned earnestness? "O Jesus of Nazareth, if these rulers and people mistake thy meaning, we pray thee, tell them so: urge their mistake on their attention: answer them with all the precision that words can convey: yea, lift up thy voice above the storm of their wrath, and declare thyself falsely accused—because misunderstood! We tremble at the consequences, shouldest thou die under this charge without rebutting it. We would not have thee martyr to a misapprehension—to an untruth!" *Fifthly*;—*Regard to the present and eternal welfare of mankind*. No greater curse could come upon man than the setting up of a false God, especially such an one as this! Such a design would involve the ruin of the world, drawing over it the pall of spiritual death, and quenching in endless darkness

all its hopes. This consideration, in connection with the foregoing, rendered it imperative upon Jesus Christ to set them right, and to disavow the assumption, *if he really did not put it forth*. Shall we now stand beside him and listen? His answer to the High Priest is, "*Thou sayest it*." I do profess to be as thou sayest." No hint does he give to them or to Pilate, of their mistake, if mistake it was: and he seals this great assumption with his blood. What, then, shall we think? Why, either that he was the most unaccountable as well as the worst of men, who well deserved his doom, or else we must come to the conclusion which, in our judgment, is the only rational one, that the Being who so acted, *is a new form of existence*;—that in his person time and eternity, infinity and limitation, laws the most opposite meet and are reconciled, and that we behold in him the grand anomaly of infinite majesty clothed in meekness; supreme dominion rendering obedience; absolute sovereignty exhibiting entire resignation,—in other and apostolic words, "God manifest in the flesh."

And then to turn round upon us and to talk of *impossibility* in this matter is simply ridiculous, if it be not presumptuous. What is impossible? Contradictions are. But this is not a contradiction. What in this case is contravened *save our experience*? and is this to be the measure of possibility? Shall all things of which we have not had experience be declared impossible, or contradictory? Who are *we* that we may unpresumptuously thus determine? Who shall limit the Holy One of Israel? Were we to reason only upon those antecedent ideas we form, and in accordance with which this is deemed impossible; we should have to declare it impossible that the King Eternal, Immortal, Invisible, could ever have spoken to man, or appeared on earth, or dwelt in tabernacle or temple. It is simply this, and this we maintain not only unblushingly, but with hallowed delight, that this Incarnation is without parallel. There is nothing with which to compare it. It stands out unique in majesty, alone in its solitary grandeur—an incontrovertibly great mystery! Such a position is fitting. When God would select a medium of his most benevolent expression and interposition, when He would open an eternal path of access between himself and man; there was propriety in departing from all usual modes, and rearing up in the presence of the universe of intelligent beings, an unique, resplendent, most glorious mystery!

While dealing with those who venture to ridicule this faith as among old wives' fables, in these modern days ex-

ploded, it would not be impertinent to ask, what they think of Christ? We confess to an impatience of the merely negative. We are unable to feed upon denials. We need the positive. Who then is Christ according to our opponents. They ridicule the declaration that he is a being having in one person *two* distinct natures, saying that the theory of the two natures in Christ is but a logical subterfuge wherewith to escape difficulty. Now we can understand the theory of the Socinian who regards Jesus of Nazareth as simply and only a man, one of earth's heroes. That this view is utterly inconsistent with his own account of himself, there can be no doubt. Still the statement is perfectly clear and unmistakeable. But there are many who contend for a higher form of existence than is supposed by the Socinian, and who yet refuse to recognise the supreme God in Jesus Christ. And these scornfully repel the idea of two natures in Jesus. Our question then remains, What is he? If he be man and highest angel or archangel, then he has two natures. If he be only a high and glorious created being, standing far above all other creatures in dignity and glory, but yet infinitely removed from Deity as every creature must be, then, who was the being that appeared in Palestine eighteen hundred and more years ago, whose teachings we have now been listening to? *Was he not a man?* Must we set about to prove that Jesus of Nazareth was a *human being*? Is the ancient heresy revived referred to by the apostle John? "Every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God." We repeat the query, "What is Christ?" On the whole, looking at the entire aspect of our Lord's teaching, one is not surprised at the remark of a German infidel, scornful as was its tone. "If Jesus Christ of the New Testament be not God, then all I can say is, that he did all he could to make people believe that he was God."

Finally, prophecy had created the expectation of an illustrious deliverer, for whom certain descriptive titles had been set apart, and, as it were, consecrated to his sole use; so that no other might think of appropriating them. The Messiah or Christ—the Son of man—the Son of God—were names as incommunicable, if not as awful, as the solemn Jehovah of the Supreme Being; for they described a person and an office, unique in splendor and majesty. Jesus of Nazareth came—he appropriated these titles to himself, and he wore them with a naturalness and ease, indicative of his right to them. If that right were challenged, instant was the vindication, both by word and deed. If he had not come and spoken unto them, unbe-

lievers would not have had sin. If he had not done among them works which none other did, they had not had sin. But having done both, they had no cloak for their sin.

Men and brethren, whatever may be our speculative reasonings concerning him, or whatever our neglects, we must have to do with Jesus Christ as the GOD-MAN; in the very nature and character in which he describes himself. Your doubts and quibbles, if you have them, cannot alter his nature, nor prejudice his claims, nor limit his power, nor remove you from his regal control. You must have to do with him whether you will or not—must meet him—must feel his glance upon your inmost heart—must have your soul in its thoughts, its habits, its character laid open before his omniscience. To this one great, all-important matter, be entreated now to give earnest heed. He invites you to commit all your interests into his hands. As criminals you need justification—his precious blood cleanseth from all sin. As polluted, you need renovation and sanctification.—“If any man be in Christ he is a new creature.” As dissatisfied and unhappy, you need peace and rest. He says to you—“Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” As afflicted, you need the sustaining power of an arm stronger far than one of flesh. His sweet voice is heard above the roar of the billows, saying—“Be of good cheer—it is I, be not afraid.” “My grace is sufficient for thee.” As dying, you need the spiritual victory over the last enemy. He teaches you to exclaim—

“O grave where is thy victory!
O death where is thy sting!”

and triumphantly to praise him. “Thanks be unto God who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ.” After death you need a fitting home for the immortal spirit; he says—“In my Father’s house are many mansions . . . I go to prepare a place for you.”

I would not urge you thus to commit yourself and your interests for time and eternity, to a mere creature, however exalted. I feel the force of the difficulty suggested in the lines—

“Can I trust a fellow being?
Can I trust an Angel’s care?
O thou merciful all-seeing!
Beam around my spirit there.”

But I do most earnestly urge you to commit yourself, wholly, to a Saviour, Almighty and all sufficient, who is, at once, the infinite God, and the elder brother—the advocate and friend of all those who believe on him to life everlasting.

